

Iowa's Loess Hills



Monona County
Photo by Don Poggensee

**NATIONAL
SCENIC BYWAY**

LOESS HILLS NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY SPINE AND EXCURSION LOOPS



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About the Byway Maps

The main part of the Byway, called the spine, is marked in dark blue on the maps. The spine is always on paved roads, ranging from two-lane county highways to state highways and four-lane interstates.

Excursion loops and connections are marked in green. These routes are a mix of gravel and paved roads.

Red numbers: The county maps show the mileage between various points on the spine.

Byway Attractions, indicated by triangles with black letters, are the most closely related to the hills in one manner or another.

Area Attractions also listed are other places you might want to visit. These are not on the Byway route but are nearby and are mentioned in the text of each chapter.

Shaded portions of the maps illustrate the extent of the landform of Iowa's Loess Hills which is determined by where the depth of the loess is greater than 60 feet.

B Roads: While traveling the Byway and its excursion routes, you may notice signs noting "B" roads off to the side of the routes. This guide does not direct readers to use any B roads. Those signs warn travelers to use those low-maintenance roads at their own risk especially if they're wet.

See page 4 for notes about driving in the Loess Hills.





Welcome to the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway

Flanking Iowa's western border, the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway passes through a unique land formation that's up to 15 miles wide and about 200 miles long from north of Sioux City, Iowa to near St. Joseph, Missouri.

So.....what are the Loess Hills?

They are hills made almost entirely of windblown soils. Toward the end of the last ice age, winds picked up soils that had been ground as fine as flour and formed dunes along the ancient waterway that became today's Missouri River. The process repeated itself during the thousands of years the ice age took to end, enlarging the dunes. Because the prevailing winds were from the northwest, the dunes on the lowa side of the river were higher than those west of the Missouri.

Today, the definition of a Loess Hill is a hill made of loess that is more than 60 feet in height; using that definition; about 640,000 acres of land in western Iowa constitute the Loess Hills landform.

Although deposits of loess are found across the world, nowhere else but China are those deposits higher than they are in Iowa.

Eventually, topsoils evolved on the dunes and a unique natural community developed. Ice age animals like woolly mammoth, camel, giant beaver and giant sloth roamed the Loess Hills during the Hills' early years. Humans have lived here off and on for 6,000 years as evidenced by stone tools, spear points, pottery and burial sites.



Native Yucca



Cat step ledges (Photo by Don Poggensee)



Cross section with uniform loess

Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery

When Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led their Corps of Discovery through this region in the summer of 1804, the Hills were covered with prairie. The scant trees that existed hugged the waterways. At that time, Oto and Missouri tribes lived in the southern part of the Hills and the Omaha in the mid-section of the Hills.

Change Comes to the Loess Hills

Around the 1850s, change came to the Loess Hills. Farms, communities and roads checked the wildfires that had cleansed the prairie of the always encroaching trees and woodland plants and, as you can see now, trees blanket most of the Hills. Of the prairie that had covered the Hills, only 22,000 acres remain with about 4,500 acres being in the Broken Kettle Grasslands, the largest self-sustaining parcel of prairie in Iowa.

Now surrounded by forests and developed lands, the pockets of prairie in the Hills are islands of prairie flora and fauna not found until hundreds of miles to the west and not seen elsewhere in Iowa. Among these animals are the prairie rattlesnake (only in a very small area near Westfield in the northern Hills), plains pocket mouse, upland sandpiper, zebra swallowtail, ornate box turtle and plains spadefoot toad. Among the plants are ten-petal blazing star, spear grass, tumble grass and prairie moonwort. The native yucca you see here is at its easternmost limit in North America.

Unique Features of the Loess Hills

The Loess Hills have some features that are unique because of their soil.

First, if you look at a hill through which a road has been cut or part has been removed (usually for fill elsewhere), you will see its cross-section is almost uniformly loess. Only in the northern and southern reaches of the Hills are rocks naturally exposed.

Second, if you were to remove the topsoil from the slope of a Loess Hill, the exposed loess will erode like sugar when saturated. Local people call the loess soil “sugar clay” for this reason. Even when covered with topsoil, loess can slump, most often in a unified manner across a slope creating the characteristic “cat step” ledges seen on some grassy hills.

Oddly though, cut a Loess Hill vertically and its wall can stand for decades due to the interlocking characteristics of the loess soil particles.

If You Want to Learn More.....

A good resource about the Loess Hills is Cornelia Mutel’s book, “Fragile Giants,” sold at area bookstores.

You can also learn about the Hills at the annual Loess Hills Seminar, conducted by the Northwest Area Education Agency (800-352-9040, ext. 6080) and held on the weekend after the Memorial Day weekend near Turin. For more info visit online at www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/upcoming_events/loess_hills_seminar

The Routes

This guide to the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway takes you through Iowa's Loess Hills from north to south, through each of the seven counties where the Hills are located. This allows you to use the guidebook and the Iowa Travel Guide, obtained from Iowa Welcome Centers and the Iowa Tourism Office, which is also set up in a north-to-south manner. Detailed maps are provided of each county.

Note that unlike most of the rest of Iowa where roads run true east and west or north and south, the roads in the Loess Hills wind here and there. You'll have plenty of opportunities to enjoy the many wonderful views and places along the way.

Traveling in the Loess Hills

Gravel Roads: A few tips for those who have not driven on gravel roads:

- 1) stay to the right when going uphill;
- 2) take curves slower than usual, allow extra time to stop and don't speed because gravel doesn't offer the best traction; and
- 3) remember, this is the nation's food basket. That means slow-moving farm equipment and trucks will be on the roads at times too, especially during spring planting and fall harvest.

Fences: Do not cross fences unless a specific opening — such as for a hiking trail — exists. Also, for those unfamiliar with Midwestern fences, do not touch single strand fences that do not have barbs on them — these are electric fences meant to contain livestock.

Other Notes

Services in the Loess Hills vary greatly as communities range from small towns of less than a hundred people to the largest cities in the Hills, Council Bluffs with 58,000 people and Sioux City with 83,000 residents.

When using this guide, you may also want to use the free Iowa Travel Guide and the official Transportation Map published by the Iowa Department of Transportation. You can get these at Iowa Welcome Centers across the state or by calling the Iowa Tourism Office at 888-472-6035 or 515-242-4705.

Enjoy the Loess Hills and when you leave, you can tell your friends that you've been to a place like none other in North America.



BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Information Kiosk, in Akron's city park along Iowa Hwy. 12 with information on the Loess Hills and the Byway.



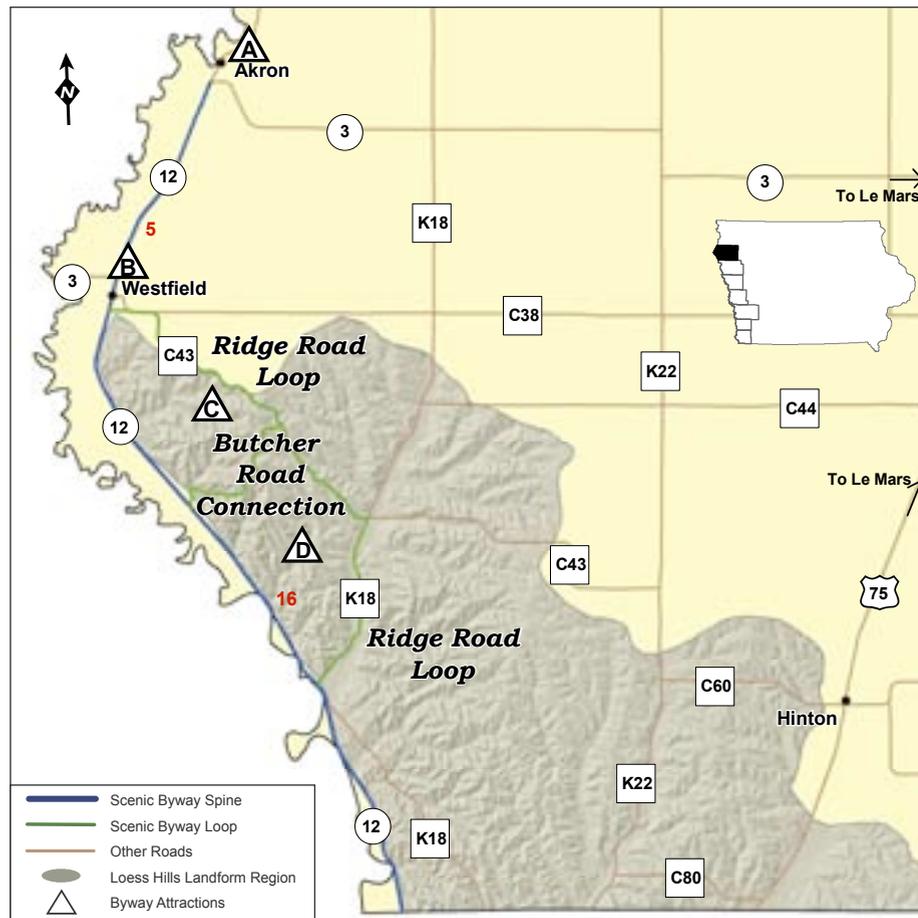
Loess Hills Interpretive Center

B Loess Hills Interpretive Center
Displays and interactive components that explain the creation of the Loess Hills and the plants and animals that live in them. Contact Westfield City Hall, 712-568-2631, or Westfield Library, 712-568-2354, for admission.

C Broken Kettle Grasslands Enjoy this 4,500-acre prairie preserve, Iowa's largest remnant of the prairies that once covered most of the state. This preserve contains flora and fauna not found in other parts of the Loess Hills, including prairie rattlesnake and ten-petal blazing star. No trails exist within the preserve but if you want arrange a visit, contact the preserve's office, 712-568-2596, or the Nature Conservancy, 515-244-5044. www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/iowa/preserves/art2210.html

D Five Ridge Prairie County Park In this 900-acre park, one of the larger roadless areas in the Loess Hills, you can feel the climate change between open prairie ridges dried by the sun and wind and the shadowy woods which are cooler and more humid. Hiking trails range from easy to rugged. The entry, 260th St., which is about a mile northeast of Iowa Hwy 12 via the north branch of County Rd. K18, is a dirt road that is impassable when wet. www.plymouthcountyparks.com

Plymouth County



THE BYWAY, north to south

- When you arrive in Akron, look for information about the Loess Hills and the Byway on the information kiosk in the city park along Iowa Hwy. 12 on the city's north side. Although Akron is the northern anchor of Iowa's Loess Hills, you're no doubt looking around and wondering, "What hills?"
If you watch as you drive south out of Akron on Iowa Hwy. 12, you will see them rise gently out of the relatively flat fields like gentle swells on the ocean on the east side of the highway within a couple miles of town. To the west you'll see the Big Sioux River, Iowa's boundary with South Dakota.
- When you arrive in Westfield, the westernmost city in Iowa, be sure to follow the signs to the Loess Hills Interpretive Center which has new exhibits in a former one-room schoolhouse at Union and Linden streets.
- As you continue south on Highway 12, you will notice the Hills rise in height and become more sharply etched. Similarly, you will also notice that, at times, the highway lies on a narrow ledge of land between the base of the Hills and the Big Sioux River.



Broken Kettle Grasslands

EXCURSION LOOPS

Ridge Road Loop

- Just south of Westfield on Iowa Hwy. 12, turn left (east) onto County Rd. C43.
- One mile later, you should follow C43 as it turns right (south, as Birch Rd.) and just more than a half-mile later, it becomes North Ridge Rd. Soon, the road lifts you above the floodplain and takes you along several ridges, offering vistas of Iowa and South Dakota. Along the way you will see Butcher Rd, which forms the Butcher Road Connection.
- About 3 miles after coming upon Butcher Rd., you will turn right (southwest) onto County Rd. K18 to return to Iowa Hwy. 12, 4 miles later.
- Along the way you will see 260th St., the dirt road entrance to Five Ridge Prairie, a Plymouth County park.
- Allow about 25 minutes travel time for this 12-mile trip on asphalt and gravel roads.

Butcher Road Connection

- A bit more than 5 miles south of Westfield on Iowa Hwy. 12, you will come to Butcher Rd., where you will turn left (east). This 4-mile gravel road meanders from the base of the bluffs to a ridge where you meet County Rd. C43 (North Ridge Road, which forms the Ridge Road Loop). Butcher Road provides several places to look over the Broken Kettle Grasslands but only one turnout exists. So if you park other than at the turnout, use care.
- Allow 10 to 15 minutes for this drive on gravel.

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Akron

Dunham Preserve: Riverside trail, foot bridges and wildflowers. Contact City Hall 712-568-2041.



*Ice Cream Capitol of the World
Visitor's Center and Museum*

Le Mars

Ice Cream Capital of the World Visitor's Center and Museum (712-546-4090):

Museum and soda fountain explain the history of ice cream and one of the world's largest ice cream makers.

Hours: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Mon.- Fri;
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Sat; and noon – 4 p.m. Sun.
May 1 – Sept. 30 and 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Tues.
– Sat., Oct. 1 – Apr. 30. www.wellsdairy.com/display.aspx?section=lemarsparlor

Plymouth County Conservation Board

(712-947-4270): Canoe rentals for use on the Big Sioux and Little Sioux Rivers.
www.plymouthcountyparks.com

Plymouth County Historical Museum

(712-546-7002): County history plus 500 musical instruments dating from King Tut's time to the present. Open, Tues. - Sun. 1 - 5 p.m., summer. www.plymouthcountymuseum.homestead.com/museum.html

SERVICES

Akron: B&B, gas, restaurants, groceries

Le Mars: lodging, gas, restaurants, groceries

Westfield: gas

INFORMATION

Plymouth County Conservation Board
(712-947-4270):
www.plymouthcountyparks.com

Plymouth County Economic Development
(712-546-6911): gtucker@hickorytech.net



Five Ridge Prairie



Big Sioux River



Blue Skipper butterfly



Broken Kettle Grasslands



A Stone State Park
(712-255-4698): On Sioux City's northwest side, the 1,069-acre park has prairie-topped ridges and dense woods. Visitors can see three states from Dakota Point and Elk Point overlooks. Multi-use trails, shelters, 9 electric and 21 non-electric campsites, RV sites and interpretive panels are throughout the park.
www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/stone.html

B Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center
(712-258-0838): Nestled in woods just south of the Hwy. 12 entrance to Stone State Park, the center is devoted wholly to the Loess Hills. The center has live reptile and fish displays, hands-on exhibits, a butterfly garden and a walk-through exhibit showing life under the prairie. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues. - Sat. 1 – 5 p.m. Sun.
www.woodburyparks.com

THE BYWAY, north to south

- Enter Woodbury County on Highway 12 near the entrance to Stone State Park on Iowa Hwy. 12. Continue south on Hwy. 12 near the base of the Hills, passing through western Sioux City. There, the Byway joins I-29 at Exit 151 and travels south for 10 miles along the Missouri River.
- At Exit 141, you leave I-29 for County Rd. D38 which runs east through some small hills before turning southeast onto County Rd. D25.
- After traveling on the flanks of the Hills, which offer views of the wide valley of the Missouri River, enter the Hills and shortly afterward arrive in Smithland.
- From there, take County Rd. L12 to the south (right).



Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center



Siouxland Historic Railroad Association

C **Siouxland Historical Railroad Association** (712-233-6996): 3400 River Rd. south of Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center on Highway 12. In the former Milwaukee Railroad roundhouse complex, the museum displays the city's historic steam locomotive, GH 1355 (which is on the National Register of Historic Places), a switch engine and rolling stock. Call for hours.
www.milwaukeerailroadshops.org

D **Sergeant Floyd River Museum and Welcome Center** (712-279-4840): Off I-29 at Exit 149, this former survey and inspection boat of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hosts scale models of boats that have traveled the nation's inland waterways as well as information about the Lewis and Clark expedition. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily except major holidays.
www.siouxcitymuseum.org/sgt_floyd.asp

E **Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and Betty Strong Encounter Center** (712-224-5242): Near the Sgt. Floyd Welcome Center, this center presents you with interactive displays, animatronics figures and changing photo exhibits relating to the expedition led by Lewis and Clark who passed through here in 1804 and 1806. Also learn about Lakota games and the Missouri River and explore the Garden of Discovery. The new addition of the Encounter Center expands the discussion of all the encounters since the Expedition. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues. - Sat. noon – 5 p.m. Sun.
www.siouxcitylcic.com

EXCURSION LOOPS

Stone Park Loop

- You will find this 3-mile paved route pretty curvy as it passes through the 1,069-acre state park on the northwest side of Sioux City. Be aware that hikers are on the road at times.
- You should allow about 15 minutes for this 3-mile paved loop.

Smokey Hollow Loop

- You travel a 12-mile-long triangle north of Smithland in a region dominated by woods and farm fields. The route begins in Smithland and heads north on Iowa Hwy 21 to Oto.
- In Oto, turn left (west) onto 290th St. until you reach Knox Avenue about 8 miles later.
- There, turn left (south) onto Knox which eventually returns you to the west side of Smithland when you meet Old Highway 141 and turn left (east).
- Sioux outlaw Inkpaduta camped in this region before leading others north to commit the Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857.
- Allow 20-25 minutes for this pleasant loop on paved and gravel roads.

Stagecoach Trail Loop

- You'll be on paved and gravel roads for most of this 7-mile route that heads west of Smithland on Iowa Hwy. 141 to County Rd. K67 which you take to the south. Watch for traces of the stagecoach trail that once connected Sioux City with other communities. Southwood Conservation Area is on the route as are Fowler Forest Preserve and the Smithland Museum and Log Cabin. The route has limited sightlines. Along the way, note a rarity in the Loess Hills — a nob hill standing all by itself on the west side of K67.
- Allow about 15 minutes to drive this gravel route.



Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center

SIoux CITY

Also known as Siouxland, the Sioux City metro area encompasses three cities, three rivers and parts of three states. The Missouri River, which forms the “shore of the prairie,” was the lifeline of the community for several years. Riverboats traveling to and from Montana gold fields made Sioux City an important stop until railroads pushed further west. Now it is an economic hub of northwest Iowa.



Sergeant Floyd Monument



Smokey Hollow Loop

F Sergeant Floyd Monument

I-29 exit 143. During their two-year exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark lost only one man, Sergeant Charles Floyd who modern experts believe died of appendicitis. He was buried atop this bluff in August 1804 and the stone obelisk memorializing him is the first National Registered Historic Landmark in the nation.

G Mid-American Air Museum

(712-252-5300): Sioux Gateway Airport off I-29 at Exit 141. Aviation museum with 24 full-size military and commercial aircraft and an impressive collection of military uniforms.

www.matamuseum.org/home.html

H Fowler Forest Preserve

(712-258-0838): Just west of town. Operated by Woodbury County Conservation Board. Historical Pioneer Log Cabin: Just south of Smithland.

www.woodburyparks.com



Floyd Blvd. Local Foods Market

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Sioux City

Argosy Casino (800-424-0080; 712-294-5600): I-29 exit 149. Slots, table games, restaurants, observation deck and live entertainment in a 24/7 setting.
www.argosycasinos.com/siouxcity

Chris Larsen Park I-29 exit 149. A riverside park with the Anderson Dance Pavilion, playground, marina, sports courts and a paved trail that follows the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers.
www.sioux-city.org/dept/index.asp?deptnum=17

Floyd Blvd. Local Foods Market

(712-224-3535): I-29 exit 147A. Near historic Fourth Street District, this market includes a farmers market that's open Wed. and Sat., year-round and promotes organically grown produce; the Market Store, which offers organic meats, baked goods, milk, etc. and is also open year-round.



Sioux City Art Center

Sioux City Art Center (712-279-6272): I-29 exit 147B. A 45,000-square-foot facility that's a work of art in itself with wonderful exhibits and a hands-on children's gallery. Open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues., Wed., Fri., Sat; 10 a.m. – 9 p.m. Thurs; and 1 – 5 p.m. Sun.
www.siouxcityartcenter.org

Sioux City Public Museum (712-279-6174): I-29 exit 147B. Set in a Romanesque mansion with collections ranging from Indian artifacts to Civil War items. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues. – Sat; 1-5 p.m. Sun.
www.siouxcitymuseum.org

Trinity Heights (712-239-5835): I-29 exit 147A. A religious site with a life-size wood carving of DaVinci's Last Supper and 30-foot-tall, stainless steel statues of Christ and Mary amid the gardens. Open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mon. – Sat; noon – 4 p.m. Sun.
www.sctrinityheights.org

Woodbury County Courthouse

(712-279-6539): I-29 exit 147B. Built in 1917, the nation's largest government building designed in the Prairie School style of architecture.
www.woodbury-ia.com/photos.asp

Smithland

Inkpaduta Canoe Trail (712-225-5959): More than 130 miles long, the Little Sioux River, which begins in Spencer, has six access points in Woodbury County.
www.woodburyparks.com

Sloan

Winnavegas (800-468-9466; 712-428-WINN): Casino with slot machines, table games, restaurant, snack bar and lounge, off I-29 at Exit 127.
www.winnavegas.biz

INFORMATION

Welcome Center Sgt. Bluff (712-943-4860)

Sgt. Floyd River Museum and Welcome Center (800-593-2228; 712-279-4840):
www.siouxcitymuseum.org/sgt_floyd.asp

Sioux City Tourism Bureau (800-593-2228; 712-279-4800):
www.siouxcitytourism.com

Woodbury County Conservation Board (712-258-0838):
www.woodburyparks.org

SERVICES

Sergeant Bluff: lodging, gas, restaurants, shopping, groceries

Sloan: lodging, gas, groceries, casino

Smithland: gas, groceries

Sioux City: lodging, B&B, gas, restaurants, groceries, casino, shopping, parks, marina, airport, camping



Sergeant Floyd River Museum and Welcome Center

Monona County



BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Timber Ridge Winery and Vineyard
(712-353-6600): 33500 153rd St., north of
Castana. www.timberidgeiowa.com



Highway L16

B The Loess Hills Wildlife Area, Turin Loess Hills Nature Preserve and the Sylvan Runkel State Preserve
(712-423-2426): These three state-owned areas total more than 3,500 acres just north of Turin. They are also one of the larger areas in the Loess Hills that show the hills in their native prairie habitat. Some hiking trails begin at parking lots located on 178th Street and Oak Avenue. Also, this region is where the annual Loess Hills Seminar is hosted by the Northwest Area Education Agency (800-352-9040) on the weekend following the Memorial Day weekend. www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/upcoming_events/loess_hills_seminar

C Turin Man Archeological Site
(712-423-1384): The remains of humans who were buried at this undeveloped site about 6,000 years ago were found in 1955 and jointly called the Turin Man. They are the oldest human remains in Iowa.

D Ingemann Danish Lutheran Church
Built in 1884 by Danish immigrants, this picturesque country church is just over 4 miles west of Moorhead on County Rd. E54.

E Preparation Canyon State Park
(712-423-2829): A group of Mormons rested here in 1853 to prepare for continuing their journey to Utah, but they left the church to follow a charismatic leader who they later discovered was a swindler. This 344-acre park has hiking trails and nine backpack campsites. www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/preparation_canyon.html

THE BYWAY, north to south

- You enter Monona County on County Rd. L12 from Smithland.
- About 5 miles after leaving Smithland, turn left (east) at 133rd St., which is also County Rd. E16, to cross the floodplain of the Little Sioux River and enter the Hills just east of the river.
- After being on 133rd St. for just under 3 miles, southeast), turn right (south) onto County Rd. L20 to ramble through more Hills until you're east of them, going south to Castana, 8 miles later,
- As you approach Castana, turn right (south) onto Iowa Hwy 175 to follow the Maple River valley toward Turin.
- When you meet Iowa Hwy. 37, 4.5 miles later, turn left (east) for 1.5 miles until you reach County Rd. L16
- At County Rd. L16, turn right (south) to drive County Rd. L16 until it joins County Rd. E54, about 7.5 miles later. In less than a mile, you will enter Moorhead.
- In Moorhead, home of the Loess Hills Hospitality Association, you will see Iowa Hwy. 183. Turn right (southeast) to take that highway down the Soldier River valley to the county's southern border, 5 miles away.



Loess Hills State Forest

F Loess Hills State Forest

(712-456-2924): More than 11,000 acres of state-owned land make up this preserve in Monona and Harrison Counties. An observation deck about 1.5 miles west of Preparation Canyon State Park is one of the best overlooks of the interior of the Hills and is handicapped accessible. Interpretive panels explain the region.

www.iowadnr.com/forestry/loesshills.html



Keelboat, Lewis and Clark State Park

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Moorhead

Moorhead Cultural Center and Loess Hills Hospitality Association (800-886-5441; 712-886-5441): Visitor center with tour guides, information about the Hills, regional art and gifts. Open 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Mon. – Sat. and 1 – 4:30 p.m. Sun. in the summer; 1-4 p.m. Mon. – Sat. in the winter.
www.loesshillstours.com

Onawa

Casino Omaha (800-858-8238; 712-423-3700): West of town with slots, table games, restaurant, lounge and gift shop. <http://500nations.com/casinos/iaCasinoOmaha.asp>

EXCURSION LOOPS

Wilderness Loop

- You travel on paved and gravel roads on this 13-mile loop which begins by continuing to go south on County Rd. L12 after the Byway Spine turns off at County Rd. E16. This passes between two spurs of the Loess Hills and across the valley of the Little Sioux River.
- Almost 5.5 miles after starting this loop, turn left (northeast) at Nutmeg Avenue.
- About 2 miles later on Nutmeg Avenue is its junction with Oak Avenue which goes both to the right (southeast) and straight ahead (northeast); go straight ahead.
- Less than 1 mile later, turn right (east) at 160th Street and stay on 160th Street. Along the way, 160th Street traverses part of the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area.
- When you meet Olive Avenue, turn right (southeast) and follow the avenue to County Rd. L20 – the Byway Spine—less than 2 miles later.
- At County Rd. L20, turn right (southwest) onto County Rd. L20 which will eventually lead you east, to Castana, a bit more than 2 miles away. Allow about 30 minutes to drive this loop.

Larpenteur Memorial Road Connection

- You take paved County Rd. L14 all the way on this 5.5-mile route that begins at the junction of L14 and L12 and follows the base of the Hills south to Turin. Small parking lots serve as trailheads. Allow about 15 minutes for this route.
- At Turin, either turn left (east) onto Iowa Hwy. 175/37 to rejoin the Byway Spine east of town or continue south on County Rd. L14 which starts Preparation Loop.

Preparation Loop

- This 15-mile loop heads south from Turin for about 9 miles along the base of the Hills on County Rd. L14 (also called Larpenteur Memorial Road) and turning left (east) onto County Rd. E60 which lifts you up into the Hills.
- About 1.5 miles after leaving L14, turn left (north) onto Oak Avenue.
- Less than $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile later is a Y-intersection where 314th St. turns right (east) and leads to Preparation Canyon State Park 1 mile later. At the entry to the park, though, if you turn left (north), 314th St. will lead you to Iowa Hwy. 183, the spine of the Byway.
- Note: If you turn left (west) at the intersection of Oak Avenue and 314th St., you will find the Loess Hills State Forest overlook, a wooded platform atop one of the hills. Trails lead from the overlook into state-owned land. Allow about 30 minutes for this drive on paved and gravel roads.



Sylvan Runkel State Preserve



Loess Hills State Forest

Lewis and Clark State Park

(712-423-2829): Lewis and Clark used a keelboat to haul most of their supplies up the Missouri River. It was moved by sail, oars, poles and towlines. The replicas of the keelboat and the explorers' smaller boats, called pirogues, which are quartered here were used in the Ken Burns' documentary, "Undaunted Courage."

www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/lewis_clark.html

Museum Complex (712-423-2776): Three museums are at one site: the Monona County Historical Museum, the Veterans Museum and the Kiwanis Museum which has a collection of historical buildings. The Monona County Arboretum is nearby. Hours vary with each museum.

www.onawa.com/museum_complex.htm

SERVICES

Castana: lodging, gas, groceries, winery

Mapleton: lodging, gas, restaurants, groceries

Moorhead: gas, restaurant, groceries

Onawa: lodging, gas, restaurants, groceries, casino

Turin: B&B

Whiting: B&B



Loess Hills Hospitality Association

INFORMATION

Loess Hills Hospitality Association

(800-886-5441; 712-886-5441):

www.loesshillstours.com

Monona County Conservation Board

(712-433-2400):

www.mononacountyconservation.com

Harrison County



Loess Hills State Forest Visitors Center

BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Loess Hills State Forest Visitor Center (712-456-2924): At 206 Polk St. in Pisgah, this nature center relates to the prairie and woods found in the Loess Hills and it also serves as the headquarters of the 11,000-acre Loess Hills State Forest. Summer Hours: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mon. – Fri. and 1-4 p.m. Sat. and Sun. Winter Hours: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mon-Fri.
www.iowadnr.com/forestry/loesshills.html

B Murray Hill Scenic Overlook This overlook on County Rd. F20 is one of the best in the Hills. Hike up the hill through prairie grasses for better views of the Hills and the Missouri River valley; interpretive panels are found along the way. This site is not handicapped accessible.
www.HarrisonCountyParks.org/parks/murrayhill.htm

C Small's Fruit Farm (712-646-2723): One of several orchards in the area near the junction of Iowa Hwy. 127 and County Rd. F32, Small's is where you can pick about 30 varieties of apples, buy various produce, jellies, jams and pies or watch the cider press in season. A restaurant has homemade pies and more. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily in the winter and spring, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily in the summer and fall.
www.smallsfruitfarm.com

D Museum of the Religious Arts (712-644-3888): Judeo/Christian artifacts and art work. Open: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Tues. – Sat. and noon – 5 p.m., Sun. Closed major holidays and for the first five business days following New Year's Day.
www.mrarts.org



THE BYWAY, north to south

- Enter Harrison County on Iowa Hwy. 183 from the north and pass through Pisgah, home of the Loess Hills State Forest Visitor Center.
- A bit more than 9 miles south of Pisgah, you meet Iowa Hwy. 127 which you take for 11 miles to the east edge of Logan, the county seat.
- At Logan, you turn left (west) on U.S. 30, which was the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway. As you drive west, you will arrive at the Harrison County Historical Village and Iowa Welcome Center.
- No more than one-half mile beyond the Harrison County Historical Village and Iowa Welcome Center on U.S. 30, turn left onto County Rd. F58 which runs east.
- About 4 miles later, at the junction of County Rd. L34, you turn right (south) to take L34 to the southern county line, about 6 miles away.

EXCURSION LOOPS

Fountainbleu Loop

- Travel about 9 miles as this loop heads west from Pisgah on County Rd. F20 to visit the overlook at Murray Hill.
- After leaving the overlook parking lot, County Rd. F20 meets County Rd. L14 a half-mile later.
- Also called Larpenteur Memorial Road, County Rd. L14 runs along the base of the Hills and turns briefly into the Missouri River valley before meeting Eden Avenue about 3.25 miles later.
- At Eden Avenue, also called, County Rd. K, turn left (south) for 1.5 miles.
- When you meet 165th Trail, turn left (east) until you reach Geneva Place, just more than 3.75 miles later.
- At Geneva Place, turn right (east) and follow the signs back to Pisgah, about 4.25 miles to the north and east.
- Allow about 30 minutes drive time on paved and gravel roads.

Orchard Ridge Loop

- Travel nearly 12 miles on this loop which goes east of Pisgah on County Rd. F20 and then south on County Rd. L23 through gently rolling hills to Magnolia where you rejoin the Byway Spine.
- Allow about 20 minutes' drive time on paved roads.

Sawmill Hollow Run

- On this route, which starts where County Rd. L20 departs south from Iowa Hwy. 127, you follow an 1850's stagecoach route, now an 11-mile journey. County Rd. L20 runs along the base of the Hills, before entering the Hills for nearly 6 miles until you meet County Rd. L23
- At County Rd. L23, head north to Magnolia where you rejoin the Byway's Spine.
- Although the route is entirely paved, you can also visit Sawmill Hollow which is accessed off County Rd. L20 by a low-maintenance "B" road that is well marked; caution is urged.
- Allow about 20 minutes drive time.



Snow Geese at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge

Harrison County Historical Village and Iowa Welcome Center

(712-642-2114): Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Information. Portal with access to Byway guides, 24/7.

The historical village has agricultural displays, Indian artifacts and historical buildings.

The welcome center has a gift shop, public restrooms and free cherry drink. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Mon.-Sat. and noon – 5 p.m., Sun.

www.HarrisonCountyParks.org/welcome



Willow Lake Recreation Area

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Dunlap

Dunham Stock Farm Barn (712-643-5908 or 712-643-5721): Built in 1857, this barn is a historic landmark; open only by appointment.

Main Street Cakes & Gifts (712-643-1307): Old-time soda fountain.

McClellan Museum and Dougal House (712-643-5908 or 643-5721): See an old Booster Buck, a square grand piano and many antique farm items. Open 2-4 p.m., Sat. and Sun., Memorial Day – Labor Day.

Woodbine

Eby Drug (712-647-2840): A 1950s-style soda fountain in downtown.

Lincoln Highway One of the longest sections of original brick road with sign posts; in the city. www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/iowa/iowa/harrisonCo/woodbine.html

Willow Lake Recreation Area

(712-647-2785): A year-round facility with campground, cabins, fishing and beach. www.HarrisonCountyParks.org

Missouri Valley**DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge**

(712-642-4121): 5 miles west of I-29.

About 500,000 snow geese visit here each November and the visitor center exhibits artifacts recovered from the steamboat *Bertrand* which sank here in 1865 and was discovered a century later. Visitor Center hours: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. daily except federal holidays.

www.fws.gov/midwest/desoto/

Wilson Island State Recreation Area

(712-642-2069): 544 acres of state land next to the Missouri River, with dense cottonwood groves sheltering tent and RV campgrounds plus a cabin; recently upgraded and adjacent to DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge.

www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/wilson_island.html

SERVICES

Dunlap: B&Bs, gas, groceries, restaurants

Little Sioux: gas, restaurants, RV campground

Logan: B&B, gas, groceries, restaurants

Magnolia: restaurants

Missouri Valley: lodging, restaurants, gas, groceries

Modale: gas, restaurant

Mondamin: gas, groceries

Pisgah: gas, restaurant

Woodbine: lodging, gas, restaurants, groceries

INFORMATION**Harrison County Conservation Board**

(712-647-2785):

www.HarrisoncountyParks.org

Harrison County Historical Village and Iowa Welcome Center

(712-642-2114):

www.HarrisonCountyParks.org/welcome

Missouri Valley Chamber of Commerce

(712-642-2553)

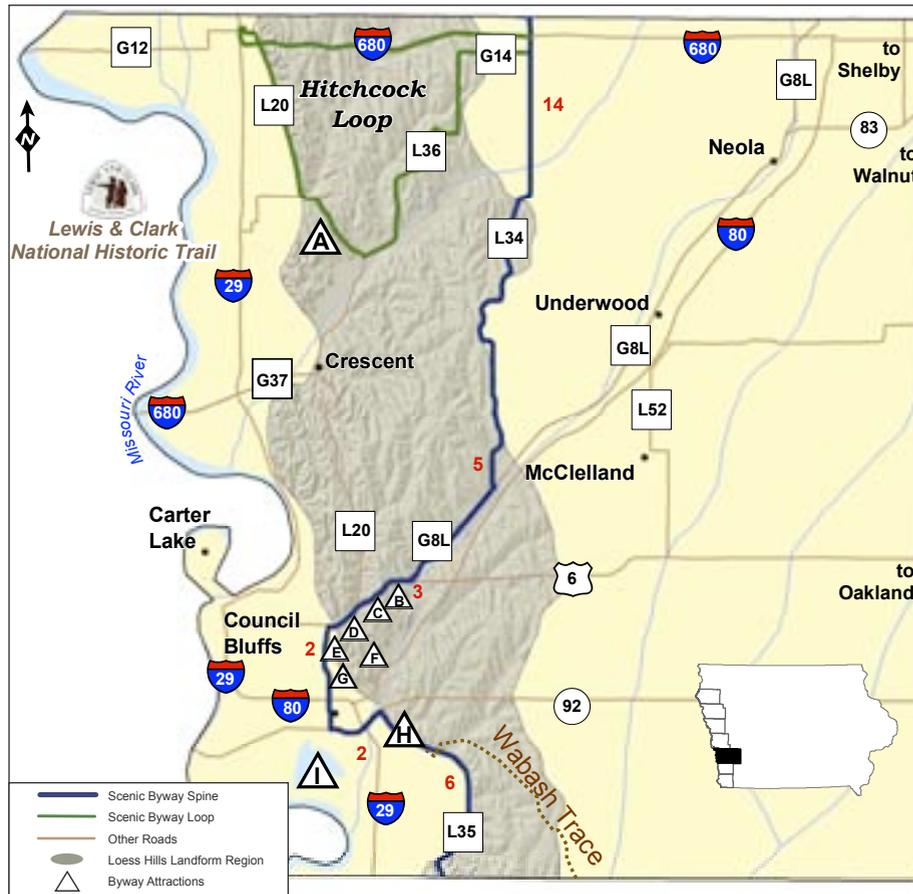


View from Murray Hill



Fountainbleu Loop

Pottawattamie County



Hitchcock Nature Area

BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Hitchcock Nature Area
 (712-545-3283): About 5 miles north of Crescent, a 1,003-acre preserve that includes the Loess Hills Lodge, an interpretive facility with exhibits and programs, prairie and woodland trails, handicapped-accessible boardwalk, cabins and campsites. An observation tower with a 360-degree view of the Loess Hills is rated as one of the best Hawk Watch stations in North America for viewing different species each fall. Open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tues. – Sat; 1 – 5 p.m. Sun., March – Nov.
www.pottcoconservation.com

B Kanesville Tabernacle
 (712-322-0500): 222 E. Broadway, Council Bluffs. This replica of the log tabernacle is where Brigham Young became president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, visitor center and gardens, all related to Mormon history. Open 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m., daily, Apr. – Sept. and 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily, Oct. – Mar. <http://www.lds.org/placestovisit/location/0.10634.1809-1-1-1.00.html>

C Bayliss Park This downtown green space has a new plaza, artistic water fountain, interactive children's water fountain, larger-than-life-size squirrel statues and a performance pavilion. A veteran's memorial is also in the park.
<http://parksandrec.councilbluffs-ia.gov/parks.asp>

D Union Pacific Railroad Museum
 (712-329-8307): 200 Pearl St., Council Bluffs. Next to Bayliss Park in an original Carnegie Library building, this is where you want to go to learn about one of the nation's greatest railroads. Open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Tues. – Sat. www.uprr.com/aboutup/history/museum/index.shtml

THE BYWAY, north to south

- Enter northern Pottawattamie County on County Rd. L34 which passes under I-680 and continues south with horizon-to-horizon views of farm fields that seem to roll away from the Byway.
- Nearly 14 miles later, when the Byway meets County Rd. G81, you should turn right (south) to follow that for 3.5 miles to U.S. 6 which leads into Council Bluffs.
- At U.S. 6, turn right (east) to go to S. 7th St. (Iowa Hwy. 192), a one-way street going south to the South Expressway which passes under I-29/80 to meet the South Omaha Bridge Rd., 3 miles later.
- At the South Omaha Bridge Rd. (also called Iowa Hwy. 92), you turn left (east) to pass over I-29 and then, less than 2 miles after leaving the South Expressway, meet Harry Langdon Blvd.
- At Harry Langdon Blvd., turn right (south). On your left is the Iowa School for the Deaf. Shortly afterward, the boulevard becomes Wabash Ave. and then County Rd. L35 which, for just more than 6 miles, leads you along the base of the Hills and sometimes rides high enough on their flanks to provide vistas of the Missouri River valley before you exit the county.



Historic Squirrel Cage Jail

E Historic Squirrel Cage Jail

(712-323-2509): 226 Pearl St. Council Bluffs. In this 1885 revolving jail, the cells turned to allow viewing of all cells from one vantage point. One of three left in the nation, the jail is on the National Register of Historic Places. Open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Wed. – Sat., 1-4 p.m. Sun., Apr. – Oct.
www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Jail.htm



Historic General Dodge House

F Historic General Dodge House

(712-322-2406): 605 3rd St. Council Bluffs. Built in 1869 for Civil War general and transcontinental railroad builder Grenville Dodge, this National Historic Landmark remains the city's architectural showpiece. Four blocks east of the Byway. Open 10 a.m. – 5 pm., Tues. – Sat., 1–5 p.m. Sun. Closed Jan. and holidays.
www.dodgehouse.org

Hitchcock Loop

- This 27-mile loop on paved and gravel roads heads west on I-680 from its intersection with County Rd. L34. On the way is the I-680 Scenic Overlook, a good place to view the Hills and the Missouri River floodplain.
- At I-29, turn north and exit immediately at Exit 72 to enter the small community of Loveland.
- In Loveland, turn right (south) to take County Rd. L20 to the south which runs along the edge of the floodplain to Honey Creek where you enter the Hills. Less than 2 miles south of the small community of Honey Creek is the entrance to the Hitchcock Nature Area (see below in Byway Attractions). Continue south on County Rd. L20 to County Rd. L36 about ¾-mile away.
- At County Rd. L36, also called Coldwater Avenue, turn left (northeast) and follow this gravel road that winds through the Hills to return you to County Rd. L34 near the loop's start, about 8 miles away.
- Allow about 40 minutes drive time.

COUNCIL BLUFFS

Centrally located in the Loess Hills, the community was called Kanessville when Mormons stopped here on their way west in the 1840s. In 1853, as hundreds of thousands of gold rushers and pioneers later made the city a crossroads to the west, it was renamed Council Bluffs, reflecting the title given the region by Lewis and Clark in 1804.

G Rails West Railroad Museum

(712-323-5182): A former Rock Island depot with railroad memorabilia, the museum has a large HO-scale display with rolling stock and locomotives on the tracks outside. On the east side of the Byway near the South Expressway's 16th Ave. intersection. Open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Wed. – Sat., 1-4 p.m. Sun., Apr. 1 – Oct. 31.
www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot.htm

H Wabash Trace Nature Trail

Listed among the nation's top ten trails by Mountain Biking magazine, this 67-mile-long trail to Iowa's southern border. The trailhead is less than a mile south of the U.S. 275/Iowa 92 intersection and links to city trails.
www.inhf.org/iowatrails/wabash-intro.htm

I Lake Manawa State Park

(712-366-0220): Recreation area with beach, campsites and a Dream Playground for children. The park is best accessed by going south of I-80/29 on the South Expressway (also called Iowa Hwy. 192) less than a mile to the intersection with South Omaha Bridge Rd. (also called U.S. 275). Turn right (west), drive ½-mile to S. 11th St., turn left and at the Y-intersection, turn right onto 3rd Avenue which leads around the west side of the lake to the park's entrance on the south side of the lake, nearly 3 miles away.
www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/lake_manawa.html



Wabash Trace Nature Trail



Lewis and Clark Monument grounds, Council Bluffs



Southern Pottawattamie County near U.S. 275

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Carson

Whispering Hills Vineyard and Winery (712-484-3312): 43538 Cottonwood Rd., Carson
www.whisperinghillsvineyards.com

Council Bluffs

Ameristar Casino (712-328-8888): I-29 exit 52. Casino with slots, table games and cruises; hotel with restaurants, live entertainment and children's center.
www.ameristar.com/council/index.asp

Harrah's (712-329-0600): I-29 exit 53A. Casino with slots and table games, hotel, restaurants, health club and live entertainment. www.harrahs.com/casinos/harrahs-council-bluffs/hotel-casino/property-home.shtml

Horseshoe Casino (712-323-2500): I-29/I-80 exit 1B. Slot machines and table games, keno, live and simulcast greyhound races, simulcast horse races, restaurants, RV camping and live entertainment. www.harrahs.com/casinos/horseshoe-council-bluffs/hotel-casino/property-home.shtml



Bayliss Park, Council Bluffs

Lewis and Clark Monument (800-228-6878; 712-328-4650): On ridges overlooking Council Bluffs, Omaha and the Missouri River Valley, this plaza honors the passage of Lewis and Clark in 1804 and 1806. <http://parksandrec.councilbluffs-ia.gov/parks.asp>

Western Historic Trails Center

(712-366-4900): This center explains the history of the Oregon, California, Mormon and Lewis and Clark Trails. The center also has a gift shop and is an Iowa Welcome Center. Live country music you can listen to or join in, on Thurs. afternoons. Open 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily, summer; and 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. winter.
www.state.ia.us/government/dca/shsi/sites/western_trails/western_trails.html

Treynor

Prairie Crossing Vineyard and Winery
 (712-487-3812): 31506 Pioneer Trail,
www.prairiecrossingwine.com

Walnut

Iowa's largest group of antique dealers in century-old storefronts along brick streets.
Visitor Center
www.iowasantiquecity.com/welcome.php

Omaha, Nebraska

Durham Western Heritage Museum
 (402-444-5071): Omaha history, Union Pacific Railroad cars, changing exhibits.
www.dwhm.org

Henry Doorly Zoo (402-733-8400): World's largest indoor jungle and desert, aquarium with glass tunnel, large nocturnal animal exhibit, aviary, IMAX Theater and more. Rated by Readers Digest as the nation's best zoo.
www.omahazoo.com

Joslyn Art Museum (402-342-3300): one of the best collections of art of the American West. www.joslyn.org

Old Market Old warehouse district housing trendy restaurants, galleries, shops and condos. www.omahaoldmarket.com

Lauritzen Gardens (402-346-4002): Omaha's botanical center with formal gardens, Japanese garden, prairie area, rose gardens, shade gardens, outside scale model railroad.
www.omahabotanicalgardens.org/

SERVICES

Loveland: gas

Honey Creek: restaurant

Crescent: B&B, gas, restaurants, groceries

Council Bluffs: lodging, B&Bs, gas, restaurants, groceries, casinos, shopping, camping, multi-use trails, Wabash Trace Trailhead, bike rental.

Hancock: canoe rental

Neola: gas, restaurant, groceries

Underwood: lodging, gas, restaurant

Treynor: gas, restaurant, groceries

INFORMATION

Council Bluffs Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-228-6878; 712-325-1000):
www.councilbluffs-iowa.com/convention_and_visitors

Pottawattamie County Conservation Board (712-328-5638):
www.pottcoconservation.com

Iowa Welcome Center Underwood (712-566-2905) underwc@qwest.net

Western Historic Trails Center and Iowa Welcome Center (712-366-4900):
www.iowahistory.org/sites/western_trails/western_trails.html#Western



Loess Hills Wildlife

Crescent

Loess Hills Vineyard and Winery
 (712-545-3054): 1120 Old Lincoln Hwy.
www.loesshillsvineyardandwinery.com

Mt. Crescent Ski Area (712-545-3850): Ski Hill Rd. Downhill seasonal fun with rentals, lessons and tube runs.
www.skicrescent.com

Minden

Breezy Hills Vineyard and Winery
 (712-485-2083): 31735 Tamarack Rd.,
www.breezyhills.com

Oakland

Nishnabotna Historical Museum
 (712-482-6802): Downtown; regional museum

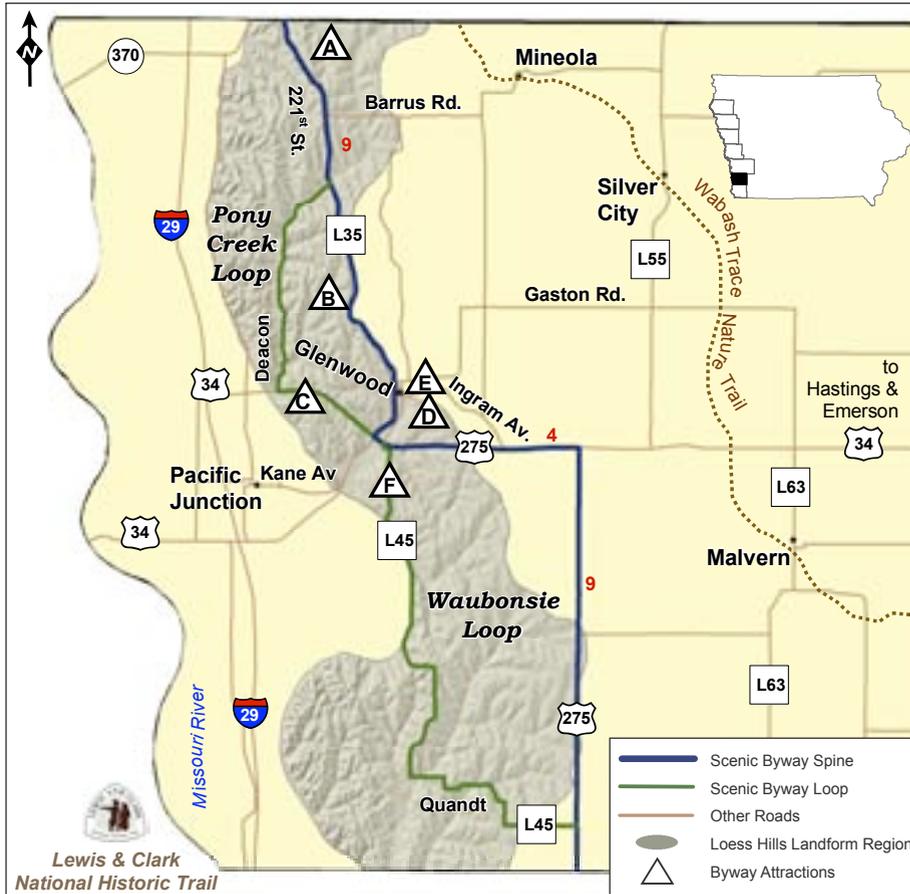
Shelby

Carstens Memorial Farmstead
 (712-323-2509): South of Shelby, Iowa. A 19th Century working farm on summer weekends, 1-4 p.m. and celebration on first weekend after Labor Day.



Mt. Crescent Ski Area

Mills County



THE BYWAY, north to south

- Enter Mills County on County Rd. L35, also called 221st St. When the Byway enters the county, you leave the valley of the Missouri River and travel through the range's western front to Glenwood where the Byway becomes Locust Street.
- Continue south through Glenwood until you reach U.S. 34.
- Head east on U.S. 34 for a bit more than 4 miles.
- Upon meeting U.S. 275, turn right (south) and follow the highway to the county's southern border, about 9 miles away.



Folsom Point

BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Salem Lutheran Church

Located less than 2 miles east of 221st St. on Ashton Rd. (the first gravel road to the east of the highway south of the Mills-Pottawattamie County line), this simple rural church was built in 1867 by German immigrants, making it one of western Iowa's oldest buildings. Drive carefully on this winding gravel road.



Fishing at Pony Creek Park

B Pony Creek Park

(712-527-9685): Northwest of Glenwood on Deacon Road, the park has an 82-acre lake, fishing, hiking trails, picnicking and seven campsites.

www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html

C Mile Hill Lake

(712-527-9685): Off eastbound U.S. 34 southwest of Glenwood this county park has an overlook and interpretive panels and is a quiet place to cast a line into the 10-acre lake.

www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html

D Glenwood Lake Park

East of downtown Glenwood, this park has a pond with waterfowl, playground and the 750-seat, open-air Davies Amphitheater (712-527-3334) which has live performances on summer weekends for nominal admissions. Also in the park is the Mills County Historical Museum (712-527-5038) which has historical buildings and artifacts of the Glenwood Culture Nebraska Phase Native Americans. Open Sat. & Sun 1-4 p.m. May – Sept.

www.glenwoodnet.com/davies.html

EXCURSION LOOPS

Pony Creek Loop

- This 9-mile route starts about 5 miles north of downtown Glenwood by leaving 221st St. at Deacon Ave. and then rambles through the Loess Hills to the west and south.
- Along the way, you meet Pony Creek Park.
- Afterward you come to U.S. 34 which you take to the east to rejoin the Byway just south of Glenwood.
- Allow about 18 minutes drive time on part paved and part graveled surfaces.

Waubonsie Loop

- This 12-mile route starts where County Rd. L45 (also called Levi Rd.) takes you south from U.S. 34 just southeast of Glenwood to go along the base of the Hills and then into the Hills. Expect lots of turns.
- About 8 miles from the start of this route, turn left (east) onto Quandt Rd., another road that winds around for almost 3 more miles before you rejoin County Rd. L45.
- At County Rd. L45, turn left (east) and follow County Rd. L45 for 1.5 miles to meet the Byway's Spine at U.S. 275 about a mile north of Tabor.
- Along the way is the picturesque countryside Waubonsie Church.
- Allow about 30 minutes drive time on paved and graveled surfaces.



Indian Earth Lodge, Glenwood Lake Park

E Indian Earth Lodge

(712-527-5038): North of Glenwood Lake Park, this replica of a grass-covered earth lodge used by area Indians shows how they lived on the plains around 950 – 1300 AD. For a tour, stop at the Mills County Historical Museum at Glenwood Lake Park.

F Foothills Park

(712-527-9685): Off U.S. 34 at Levi Rd., near the northern end of the Waubonsie Loop, this park has 3 miles of walking trails.



Native American Artifacts



Waubonsie Loop



Along Highway 370, northern Mills County



Phlox flowers

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Glenwood

Kings Crossing Vineyard and Winery (712-527-2873), 53086 260th St., northeast of Glenwood. www.kingscrossingvineyard.com

West Oak Forest (712-527-9685): Northwest of Glenwood on County Rd. L31, this county park has trails leading through heavy woods and grassy hilltops. www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html

Hastings/Emerson

Indian Creek Museum (712-824-7730): Antique farm equipment and demonstrations of handcrafts. Adjacent to Lake George County Park which has camping.

SERVICES

Glenwood: lodging, gas, restaurants, groceries

Malvern: B&B, Wabash Trace Trailhead

Mineola: restaurant, Wabash Trace Nature Trail Trailhead

Pacific Junction: lodging, B&B, gas, restaurant

Silver City: restaurant, Wabash Trace Nature Trail

INFORMATION

Glenwood Chamber of Commerce (712-527-3298): www.glenwoodia.com

Mills County Conservation Board (712-527-9685): www.millscoia.us/consboard/consmap.html



Purple coneflower

BYWAY ATTRACTIONS

A Todd House Museum

(712-629-2675): Built in 1853 in Tabor, this parsonage was a stop on the Underground Railroad and an arsenal for abolitionists. It's two blocks west of the Byway near the city park on Center St. Open by appointment. <http://community.heartland.net/tabor-library/todd.htm>

B Sugar Clay Winery

(712-628-2020): 1446 240th Ave., northeast of Thurman, vineyard and winery. www.sugarclaywinery.com

C Riverton Wildlife Area

(712-374-3133): West of Riverton, this region is a favorite stop over for migrating waterfowl, particularly during late November and December.



Along Highway L44 north of Hamburg

D Waubonsie - Wa-Shawtee State Park

(712-382-2786): Known for its exceptional fall colors and overlooks, this 1,992-acre park southwest of Sidney has trails for hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders, shelters and campsites for RVs, tents and horse enthusiasts. The park expanded with the recent addition of Camp Wa-Shawtee which includes rental cabins, a lodge and a lake for fishing. www.iowadnr.com/parks/state_park_list/waubonsie.html



Wine tasting in the Loess Hills

Fremont County



THE BYWAY, north to south

- Enter Fremont County on U.S. 275 which leads through Tabor until its junction with County Rd. J18
- At County Rd. J18, turn right (west) to go through the Hills. About 6 miles later, you will meet County Rd. J24.
- At County Rd. J24, turn right to enter Thurman.
- In Thurman, watch for Washington Street and turn left (south) onto that street. Just outside of town, Washington St. becomes County Rd. L44, also called Bluff Rd. and this will lead you along the base of the Hills on the eastern edge of the valley of the Missouri River.
- About 17 miles after beginning your journey on L44, you enter Hamburg where the route becomes the city's main thoroughfare, E Street. E Street takes you to the east side of Hamburg where you meet U.S. 275 again and continue going straight (east).
- The last length of your drive on the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway leads you across the Nishnabotna River.
- Soon, you and U.S. 275 turn right to go to Iowa's southern border, just over a mile away, with a ridge of the Loess Hills on your left and the Nishnabotna on your right.

Fremont County

EXCURSION LOOPS

Pleasant Overview Loop

- This paved, 20-mile loop takes you east from the Spine toward Sidney on County Rd. J34, also called Knox Rd. Note that just after you get on County Rd. J34, if you take the first gravel road to your left (north), you'll end up at an old cemetery which provides a beautiful overlook of some of the Loess Hills.
- On County Rd. L34, you will wind through the Hills to meet U.S. 275 in the southern part of Sidney.
- Turn left (north) onto Main St. which soon veers to the right around the county courthouse as Indiana St.
- At the far side of the square, you turn right at Filmore St., which is also Iowa Hwy. 2. This leads you out of the Hills onto the flats created by the West and East Nishnabotna Rivers.
- About 5 miles out of Sidney, you turn south on County Rd. L68 to the Riverton Wildlife Area, less than 4 miles south of Iowa Hwy. 2. Bring binoculars to watch the birds.
- In the town of Riverton, turn right (west) onto K St., which is also County Rd. J46.
- Upon intersecting U.S. 275 4.5 miles later, go straight on what is now Iowa Hwy. 2. In less than 2 miles is Waubonsie - Wa-Shawtee State Park and, a mile later, the Byway Spine on County Rd. L44 which is also called Bluff Rd.
- Allow about 35 minutes drive time on this paved route.

Spring Valley Loop

- This 3-mile route on gravel leads you through cuts in the Hills before rejoining the Byway Spine. Some caves and brick-faced cellars can be seen as well as some stone outcroppings, a rarity in the Loess Hills.
- You begin this loop by turning left (east) from County Rd. L44 onto 222nd St. which is less than a half mile south of County Rd. L34, the beginning of the Pleasant Overview Loop. At 270th Avenue, you turn right (south) and the avenue will lead you back to County Rd. L44, the Byway Spine, shortly.
- You will probably spend less than 10 minutes on this short drive on gravel surface.



Loess Hills south of Thurman

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Hamburg

Hillside Orchard (712-382-1277): North of town. Fresh fruit and berries in season, coffee shop with homemade pies and noon lunch. Farmers market, summer Fridays 5:30 -8 p.m.

Mincer Orchard

(712-382-1014): Established in 1864, it's the oldest operating orchard in Fremont County, with a roadside market offering homegrown fruits and cider near Waubonsie-Wa-Shawtee State Park.

Stoner Drug (712-382-2551): A soda fountain on Main Street where you can order a "fried egg sundae" which really is all ice cream, and lots of other cool treats.



Southern Loess Hills Interpretive Center

Percival

Southern Loess Hills Interpretive / Iowa Welcome Center (712-382-1272): 2083 Crossroads Dr., which is northwest of the I-29 and Iowa Hwy. 2 interchange (Exit 10 on I-29), this center educates visitors about the Hills with hands-on exhibits and provides information to those driving the Byway and Iowa. Open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mon. - Sat. and noon – 4 p.m. Sun.

Randolph

Ferrel House Museum (712-625-4411): An 1871, 14-room Italianate house with original furnishings. Tours by appointment.

Riverton

State's Oldest Chautauqua Building, located south of Summer Avenue, and on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sidney**Fremont County Historical Museum**

(712-374-2335): Features Indian artifacts, one-room school, farm implements, period rooms and rodeo history. A historical church called The Gathering Place has been restored for conferences and performing arts events. Open summer weekends and by appointment.

Sidney

Penn Drug (712-374-2513): In the same family since the Civil War and still pumping cold treats at the soda fountain; fresh squeezed lemonade too.

Thurman

Skyline Sportsman's Club (712-628-4149): East of Thurman, a pheasant and quail hunting preserve and lodge with overnight rooms and guided hunts. The restaurant has a limited menu, Wed. - Fri. evenings. www.skylinehunting.net/skylinehunting/

**SERVICES**

Farragut: gas, restaurant

Hamburg: lodging, gas, restaurant, groceries

Imogene: restaurant, Wabash Trace Trailhead

Riverton: gas, groceries, restaurant

Sidney: gas, restaurant, groceries

Tabor: gas, restaurant, groceries

INFORMATION

Hamburg City Hall (712-382-1313)

Southern Loess Hills Interpretive Center / Iowa Welcome Center (712-382-1272)

Sidney City Hall (712-374-2223)

Tabor City Hall (712-629-2295)



Nishnabotna River near Hamburg



Waubonsie-Wa-Shawtee State Park

Wines of the Loess Hills – Make It a Grape Time Here

At one time, Iowa boasted more than 6,000 acres of vineyards, 3,000 of which were located in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. Pottawattamie County alone had over 600,000 vines and harvested more than 4 million pounds of grapes in 1929.

Only the hills of southern France and China's Yangtze River Valley have soils like those found in western Iowa. The distinctive flavor of the fruit grown in these soils made the Loess Hills the perfect location for vineyards and wineries.

The Depression, Prohibition and a killing freeze on Armistice Day in 1940 led to the decline of Iowa vineyards. But the most devastating impact was made by the use of 2-4D, a herbicide lethal to grapes.

Today, many people in the Loess Hills are seeking new ways to live on the land. Adding diversity to a farm or putting in an acre or two of grapes on a small homestead offers new opportunities for landowners. As a perennial crop, grapes prevent erosion of the loess soils and offer added income for the landowner.

A vineyard can produce an average of three tons of grapes per acre. One ton of grapes can make up to 150 gallons of wine. Depending upon the grape, common or premium, a grower may earn between \$800 and \$1,500 per ton of grapes harvested.



Beginning in 1999, Golden Hills Resource Conservation & Development led a movement to revitalize the grape and wine industry in the Loess Hills and create a regional wine culture once again. As a result vineyards and wineries are now producing wines in and near the Hills.

Along the Western Iowa Wine Trail, you will find cold hardy red grape varieties such as Catawba, Chambourcin, Concord, de Chaunac, Frontenac, Marechal Foch, Norton-Cynthiana, St. Croix and St. Vincent. Cold hardy white grape varieties grown in the Loess Hills include Brianna, Cayuga, Chardonel, Edelweiss, La Cross, Prairie Star, Seyval, St. Pepin and Vignoles.



MORE INFORMATION

For more information about grapes in western Iowa visit www.westerniowagrapegrowers.org or for the Western Iowa Wine Trail, visit www.westerniowawinetrail.com or the following vineyards and wineries:

Breezy Hills Vineyard and Winery
(712-485-2083), 31735 Tamarack Rd., Minden www.breezyhills.com

Kings Crossing Vineyard and Winery
(712-527-2873), 53086 260th St., Glenwood www.kingscrossingvineyard.com

Loess Hills Vineyard and Winery
(712-545-3054), 1120 Old Lincoln Hwy., Crescent www.loesshillsvineyardandwinery.com

Prairie Crossing Vineyard and Winery
(712-487-3812), 31506 Pioneer Trail, Treynor www.prairiecrossingwine.com

Sugar Clay Winery and Vineyards
(712-628-2020), 1446 240th Ave., Thurman www.sugarclaywinery.com

Timber Ridge Ranch and Winery
(712-353-6600), 33453 153rd St., Castana www.timberidgeiowa.com

Whispering Hills Vineyard and Winery
(712-484-3312), 43538 Cottonwood Rd., Carson www.whisperinghillsvineyards.com



Land Management in the Loess Hills

Occasionally you may see some burned areas in the Loess Hills but don't worry. Things are okay. In many parts of the country, fire is unwelcome but in the Loess Hills, fire is sometimes good.

Prescribed burns — fires that are intentionally set and tightly controlled — help the Loess Hills in various ways. They push encroaching woods back from parcels of prairie. They encourage warm season grasses to grow and stimulate the reproduction of various plants depending on the time of year a fire is set. And last but not least, prescribed burns reduce undergrowth that, if left unburned, can fuel an uncontrolled fire.

For centuries, wildfires cleansed Iowa's prairie of woodland plants and trees but the presence of European-American civilization in the last 150 years has stifled the wildfires. Thus, to keep the remaining prairie vibrant, trained crews create prescribed burns to do what the wildfires did.

Noting wind speed and direction, humidity, air temperature and the dryness of vegetation, the fire crews set fire to areas only on days when the conditions are right so the fire can be controlled and so the crews can accomplish specific ecological objectives. Proximity to houses, businesses and roads is considered too.

Each year, between 5,000 and 10,000 acres are burned in the 640,000-acre landform of the Loess Hills.

Besides using prescribed burns, crews also cut encroaching woody plants from the Hills as another way to preserve the original prairie habitat.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE LOESS HILLS

Akron

Crow's Nest B&B 712-568-3158

Castana

Brink Farms B&B 712-353-6730

Council Bluffs/Carter Lake

Ameristar Resort Casino 712-328-8888 or 877-462-7827
Best Western Crossroads 712-322-3150 or 800-528-1234
Comfort Suites 712-323-9760 or 877-835-3543
Comfort Inn and Suites 712-322-8282 or 800-456-4000
Country Inn & Suites 712-347-5600 or 800-456-4000
Days Inn 712-323-2200 or 800-329-7466
Days Inn Lake Manawa 712-366-9699 or 800-329-7466
Fairfield Inn 712-366-1330 or 800-228-2800
Hampton Inn 712-328-2500 or 800-426-7866
Harrah's Casino Hotel 712-329-6000 or 800-427-7274
Heartland Inn 712-322-8400 or 800-334-3277
Historic Wickham Home B&B 712-328-1872
Holiday Inn & Suites 712-322-5050 or 888-682-0900
Joyaus B&B 712-323-0212
Lake Manawa Inn 712-366-2228
LaQuinta Inn & Suites 712-347-6595 or 800-531-5900
Motel 6 712-366-2405 or 800-466-8356
Quality Inn & Suites 712-328-3171 or 800-556-6242
River of Glory Country Retreat
and B&B 712-366-4678 or 888-366-4678
Settle Inn 712-366-5555 or 888-980-5555
Springhill Suites by Marriott 888-287-9400
Starlite Motel 712-328-2626
Super 7 Inn 712-328-0553
Super 8 Motel 712-322-2888 or 800-800-8000
Super 8 Motel 712-347-5588 or 800-800-8000
Western Inn 712-322-4499 or 800-322-1842

Crescent

Crescent View B&B 712-227-0051

Dunlap

Get-Away Guest House 712-643-5584
Valley View B&B 712-643-1015

Glenwood/Pacific Junction

Bluff View Motel 712-622-8191
Castle Unicorn B&B 712-527-5539
Western Inn Motor Lodge 712-527-3175

Hamburg/Percival

American Best Value 712-382-2100
Hamburg Inn 712-382-1500
Super 8 Motel 712-382-2828 or 800-800-8000

Le Mars

Amber Inn 712-546-7066 or 800-338-0298
Amerihost Inn & Suites 712-548-4910 or 800-434-5800
Super 8 Motel 712-546-8800 or 800-800-8000
Holiday Inn & Suites 712-546-1700 or 800-465-4329

Logan

Blue Bird Run Farm B&B 712-644-3102

Malvern

Pierce Crossing B&B 712-624-8850

Mapleton

Maple Motel 712-882-1271

Missouri Valley

Days Inn 712-642-4003
Hill Side Cottages 712-642-3408
Oak Tree Inn 712-642-3000
Rath Inn 712-642-2723
Super 8 Motel 712-642-4788 or 800-800-8000

Oakland

Big Grove Country Inn &
Hunting Lodge B&B 712-482-6840

Onawa

Super 8 Motel 712-423-2101 or 800-800-8000

Sioux City

Americinn Lodge & Suites 712-255-1800 or 800-634-3444
Baymont Inn 712-233-2302
Best Western City Centre 712-277-1550 or 800-528-1234
Clarion Hotel 712-277-4101 or 800-593-0555
Comfort Inn 712-274-1300 or 800-523-8620
Days Inn 712-258-8000
Fairfield Inn 712-276-5000 or 800-228-2800
Hamilton Inn (Quality Inn) 712-277-3211 or 856-242-7989
Hampton Inn & Suites 712-274-0100
Holiday Inn Express 712-274-1400 or 800-288-4595
Holiday Inn Downtown 712-277-9400 or 800-288-4595
Palmer House Motel 712-276-4221 or 800-833-4221
Super 8 Motel Morningside 712-274-1520 or 800-800-8000
Super 8 Motel South 712-255-8888 or 800-800-8000

Sloan

Rip Van Winkle Motel 712-428-6115 or 800-962-9465
Winnavegas Inn 712-428-4280 or 800-256-7545

Tabor

The Victorian Inn 712-629-5605

Thurman

Skyline Sportsman's Club 712-628-4149

Turin

The Country Homestead B&B 712-353-6722

Walnut

Antique City Inn B&B 712-784-3722 or 800-714-3722
Clark's Country Inn 712-784-3010
Super 8 Motel 712-784-2223 or 800-800-8000
Veranda View Guesthouse B&B 712-784-2267
Red Carpet Inn 712-784-2233

Whiting

Westergaard Farms
Scandinavian B&B 712-458-2818

Woodbine

The Town Inn 712-647-3247

Disclaimer

Information on lodging facilities, amenities and rates is provided by the individual properties. These accommodations are included in this guide for the convenience of travelers. A listing here does not constitute endorsement by the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Council, Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development or the Western Iowa Tourism Region. Please call ahead for specific information and reservations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Western Iowa Tourism Region

1-888-623-4232
witr@traveliowa.org
www.traveliowa.org



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National Scenic Byway

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www.byways.org

This publication is funded in part by
Federal Highway Administration

and

Western Iowa Tourism Region

Golden Hills Resource Conservation
and Development

Fremont County Board of Supervisors

Mills County Board of Supervisors

Pottawattamie County Board
of Supervisors

Harrison County Board of Supervisors

Monona County Board of Supervisors

Woodbury County Board of Supervisors

Plymouth County Board of Supervisors

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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A special thanks to the Pottawattamie County GIS
Department for map assistance and GIS support.



Loess Hills National Scenic Byway

The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway began in 1989 as a grassroots effort by dedicated citizens in cooperation with Golden Hills Resource and Conservation Development, Inc.* “(RC&D)” and the Western Iowa Tourism Region.

The Byway became an Iowa Scenic Byway on July 8, 1998 and on June 15, 2000 received the National Scenic Byway designation.

The Byway is governed by a 12-member board of representatives from the seven Byway counties, State Historical Society, Iowa Department Natural Resources, Golden Hills RC&D, Western Iowa Tourism Region and an at-large member.

Countless thanks go to the County Boards of Supervisors’ continued financial support. Thanks also go to the County Engineers and County Conservation Boards whose members provide numerous hours of professional expertise and to the landowners and individuals who continue to volunteer their time to the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.

*Golden Hills RC&D is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the wise use and protection of natural resources for the economic and social betterment of the people of southwest Iowa.